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SUBJECT: QATAR,S PRIME MINISTER ON IRAN: "THEY LIE TO US;
WE LIE TO THEM."

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

-- Deputy Secretary of Energy Poneman and Ambassador met December 10 with Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (HBJ) to discuss energy research and development, critical infrastructure protection, and Iran.

-- HBJ indicated Qatar,s interest in a bilateral critical infrastructure protection partnership.

-- The PM was skeptical about the plausibility of Iranian acceptance of a nuclear compromise, saying he would be shocked if Iran abided by a deal to ship Low-Enriched Uranium (LEU) out of Iran.

-- The best way to deal with the Iranians, he said, is to get them to dictate the terms of any such deal. The U.S. and its partners should strive to get the Iranians to put the details in writing, including timetables for implementation.

-- HBJ characterized Qatar,s relationship with Iran as one in which "they lie to us, and we lie to them."

-- According to HBJ, the GOQ tells Iran that it should "listen to the West,s proposal or there will be military action. If not by the U.S., then by the Israelis by the middle of next year."

End Key Points.

11. (C) Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman and Ambassador met December 10 with Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani. Also present on the American side was State Department Coordinator for International Energy Affairs, David Goldwyn. DepSec Poneman thanked the Prime Minister for the meeting and expressed his hope that the U.S. and Qatar could strengthen their bilateral and investment ties.

(C) CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

12. (C) The Deputy Secretary extended USG appreciation to the Prime Minister for Qatar,s support for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The PM observed in response that "We might have our own Katrina," an apparent reference to security concerns arising from Qatar,s relationship with Iran. Deputy Secretary offered U.S. help to Qatar in protecting its critical infrastructure and in addressing its broader security concerns. Expressing interest in critical infrastructure protection, HBJ said he would talk to the Ministries of Energy and Interior on how best to take advantage of U.S. assistance.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT

13. (C) The Deputy Secretary raised science and technology investment, noting DoE interest in partnering with the GOQ on energy-related research and development projects. As an example of possible cooperation, DepSec Poneman cited computer simulation, emphasizing that the DOE national laboratories are international leaders in the field.

14. (C) The Deputy Secretary reported that DoE had recently invested in a nanotechnology program and cited this as another possible area of cooperation, telling the PM there are additional opportunities for GOQ partnerships with private labs. Shaykh Hamad immediately expressed strong interest in nanotechnology, and asked the DepSec to provide him with a paper on that subject. The DepSec agreed, and added that he would be pleased to host Shaykh Hamad at the Sandia nanotechnology facility or another national lab.

15. (C) Turning to genomics and solar technology as they relate to food production and Qatar,s National Food Security Program, Shaykh Hamad told the Deputy Secretary that he supported research in those fields, but expressed his opinion that Qatar,s investment in food and solar technology must be done on a commercial basis.

(S) IRAN,S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

16. (S) DepSec Poneman asked HBJ for his views on Iran,s nuclear program. The Deputy Secretary noted that the USG had entered into recent discussions with Iran not out of naiveté, but as an effort to address a humanitarian concern (the need for medical isotopes) while also attempting to remove a

meaningful amount of special nuclear material. Even though the effort had not to date resulted in Iranian agreement, it had borne fruit in the form of Russian and Chinese support for the most recent resolution of the IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna. The PM expressed his skepticism that the West would be able to reach a deal with Iran,s leaders, saying "I,d be surprised and shocked if the Iranians do a deal. You always think you have a deal with them and then you don,t." He continued, "The EU, Chirac, and Solana...they all thought they had a deal... Solana said two weeks; I advised him it would take two years."

17. (S) Asked for his advice on how best to approach the Iranians, HBJ said it is imperative that the Iranians commit to draft any deal, including a timetable. He reiterated that it is important to "make them tell you (what they will do). Otherwise they will say 'yes, but...' and the 'but' will be worse than a 'no.'" The Deputy Secretary countered that, "They don,t want to make a proposal." To which HBJ responded, "You don,t understand. Even Mousavi can,t make a deal!" Poneman pressed the issue, saying the U.S. would not be offering a better deal than what is currently on the table. The Prime Minister said, "I know, but this is the way they are."

18. (S) Referring to the current proposal on the Tehran Research Reactor (TRR), Deputy Secretary Poneman stressed: "This is a fleeting opportunity. If they don,t take this deal, what comes next is worse." The PM noted that the Iranians frequently press the Qataris to have dialogue on their shared natural gas field and attempt to expand the dialogue to include other subjects. HBJ said that the Qataris "are always throwing cold water on their ideas."

19. (S) On Qatar,s close ties with Iran, the PM added that he knows the U.S. becomes upset at times by what it hears about the Qatar/Iran relationship. However he characterized the relationship as one in which "They lie to us, and we lie to them." Poneman replied by underscoring that "It would be helpful if everywhere they went, they (the Iranians) heard the same thing." The PM said for Qatar,s part, he had told Iran that it should "listen to the West, s proposal or there will be military action. If not by the U.S., then by the Israelis by the middle of next year." Poneman observed that

the Russians had pressed the Iranians hard during the Vienna negotiations, reinforcing the view that Iranian failure to accept the Tehran Research Reactor deal would lead back to the UN Security Council. The PM asked if the U.S. believes the Russians were in agreement with the U.S. on the possibility of harsher measures. Poneman replied that, for now, the Russians appear to be holding a similar line to the USG on the TRR deal and we remain in close contact with Moscow.

¶10. (U) This cable has been cleared by DepSec Poneman at Department of Energy.
LeBaron